

NAME: ZEW BUDANSKY
INTERVIEWER: KAETHE SOLOMON
DATE: 1980
CAMPS: VARIOUS GHETTOES, LABOR CAMPS, MAIDANEK

[Mr. Budansky speaks with a very heavy accent and poor English grammar. He does not appear comfortable speaking in English and his thoughts did not flow very well. A literal transcription would be very difficult to read, so a modified version is presented here which faithfully maintains Mr. Budansky's thoughts while making his comments easier to read. In cases where the transcriber could not follow Mr. Budansky's thoughts, a literal transcription is maintained.]

Q: I'm Kaethe Solomon. I am interviewing Zew Budansky at Norm's Place on LaVista and Briarcliff. Mr. Budansky lives at a motel at present on Clairmont Avenue, N.E. at 30329. He was born May 16, 1924. He was between the ages of 19 and 20 at the time he was involved in the liberation of various ghettos, labor camps and a concentration camp. At the time he entered the service in Russia he was already in military training. His military unit was 171 Division, a tank corps. His rank at the time of liberation of the various ghettos was lieutenant. He liberated and saw the following ghettos, labor camps and concentration camp. In Russia he saw the Vilna Ghetto, he was in the Riga Ghetto and Rovno Ghetto. In Poland, the Warsaw Ghetto and the Livuv Ghetto. The labor camp that he was involved with was near Lodz, which was a small ghetto at which he saw only women and children when he entered. The concentration camp that he entered was Maidanek. Mr. Budansky, let's start from the beginning You are

from Russia?

A: I am actually Polish.

Q: From Poland. Let's start back there then.

A: Rovno belonged...like from here to LaVista [Road] was Russia and here was Poland. And I was born in Rovno.

Q: You lived there for how long?

A.. I was born there and I lived there until I was exactly 18 years old.

Q: And then your whole family?

A: And my whole family. My family -- my father, my mother, and my two sisters, my grandfather from my father's side, my grandmother from my mother's side, and all the uncles and the children. A family of 64 people. And when the Germans attacked in 1941¹ the choice was to run back to Russia. The only solution for the people was to run with the Russian Army and try to escape the Germans. But a lot of Jewish people were thinking different. They were talking to each other like they didn't want to leave their homes, their furniture, and in this category were my father and mother. I begged them and they said, "What can they do to us?" And they didn't have time because the city of Rovno was burning around them. The Germans were 8 kilometers from the city when I was still in the city.

Q: How many brothers and sisters?

A: I had two sisters. Two sisters and one brother.

Q: And you are the one brother?

A: And I am the one. The oldest.

Q: So there were three children. And your mother and father did what?

A: Mother and father.

¹Germany invaded the Soviet Union in 1941 and all of Poland came under German control.
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Q: What did your father do?

A: My father used to have a leather business.

Q: Leather.

A: Leather. In those days they used to make leather for the horses and they used to make belts. They used to make all kinds of little bags. It was a little place and my father and grandfather together managed this business. I went to a Hebrew School in Rovno. I didn't go to public school because they found the money to put me in Hebrew School. And when the Germans attacked in 1941, I took only a pair of shoes and a jumper and I said that I would be back in two or three days. And all the young boys and I were running together with the Russians back to the Russian side.

Q: You were now in the military?

A: No, we were running with the Russians.

Q: Just running with the Russians?

A: Yes. When we arrived in Kiev in a Russian truck, the Russians took us out and they told us, "You got two things. You can go to work or you can join the Army."

Q: Your parents and your family were still in Poland at that time?

A: I left them in Poland. In Rovno. I heard over the radio that all of Rovno had fallen and already another couple of cities before they took Kiev. And from Kiev we didn't have enough time. They evacuated us to Kubishev, a big city in Russia.

Q: Can you spell that for us.

A: I should say Samara, because they called it Samara in those days. And when we arrived in Samara they didn't ask us too many questions. They wrote a letter for us to come to a military point. We went through a medical checkup and they

asked us what do you want to be? Where do you want to go? School? Or do you want to go straight into the Army and go to the front.

Q: Where did you live at that time with these boys that you went with?

A: We lived in a place like here you call it when the....

Q: A youth hostel or....

A: A hostel but a [unintelligible] was a hostel! No water, no nothing. You can imagine there in Russia. I cried every night, "When can I see my parents?" I was not young, 18 years old, but was still feeling when can I see my family again. The time came that all the boys from Rovno talked to each other. We knew we had no chance to get back unless we went back and gave ourselves up to the Germans and we would go to the concentration camps.

Q: You knew about the concentration camps already then?

A: Oh yes. Oh yes. I knew what a concentration camp was. I knew they were taking the Jewish people around and taking them away. But they didn't know....

Q: This was in 1941?

A: 1941. And then in Kubishev I met a Russian family with another boy on a train traveling from one city to a little city. And before the end of the military, the officers school, they invited us home for dinner. They were very nice to us. They kept us one week. We slept on the floor. They didn't have beds for us but they kept us for one week, and then after three weeks we came to the military point where they were taking the people. We went through a medical check up. Very quick. They didn't make it big like they do here.

Q: Not very detailed?

A: No. As long as you had two hands and two eyes and two legs -- bad leg, good leg -- you're okay. And I was very happy because they told us that it would take a minimum of 18 months to two years to become an officer or to become

something that you want. But one morning, just 8 1/2 months later, they woke us up and put us in this big place, and in front of us were new uniforms. They gave us a shower. They gave us [unintelligible] and took us in the new uniforms, we went back on the trains, and we went to the front line. When we went to the front line, I don't need to tell you it was very, very frightening.

Q: Frightening?

A: Yes. Not only frightening but it's all this shooting. The Germans attacked us very, very hard. But God was with me all the time. I was wounded in the first three months but very light. And they put me in a little hospital and they kept me about seven weeks and right away it was back to the front line to the same division.

Q: Did you hear from your parents or your family?

A: Nothing. Nothing at all. I tried and I couldn't. Nothing at all.

Q: There was never any mail?

A: Never. Oh, no, no, not at all. When I went to the front line, I was with two Jewish boys. There were four people in my tank. One was from the Saradominga.

Q: He was from where?

A: Bessarabia. In Rumania. And you know a military man gets a, how you call it, a helmet.

Q: The helmet. The hard helmet.

A: And we would get out of the tank when it was stationery, to have breakfast maybe or something to eat. I always begged him, "Misha, never take off your helmet because a sniper can pick you off. If you are shot, you may have a chance to live. But if you're shot in the head, you haven't got a chance." And he did it for a couple of weeks and then he forgot and a sniper took him and he died

in my hands. I called him and in a second he was gone. I started to cry, "Why does this happen to a good Yiddish boy like that?" But I took it like I took everything. I am in the Army. I lost my family. I don't know what's going on there. All of our Jewish boys were very experienced, very smart. What I mean by smart is that in school they taught us about the tanks, what you're doing with the tanks, how to go to the front line, how to protect, how to shoot. Everything was okay. Other people didn't pick it up as well.

Q: But you went to a Jewish school you said?

A: In Rovno, before the war. Yes.

Q: But there you didn't learn anything about the military.

A: No. Not at all.

Q: But this was after the service?

A: I went to the Hebrew school when I was 13, 14, 15. I speak Hebrew today. I never lived in Israel. And I speak German. That will come later. I'll tell you.

Q: Then after 15 you went into a military school?

A: No.

Q: You were still in Rovno.

A: I went into the military when I was 18 after the Germans had already occupied half of Poland. The war started in 1939 if you remember. I don't think that you remember. You're young. In 1939 the Germans took half of Poland. The Russians took half of Poland. Stalin and Hitler signed the pact.² But Hitler outsmarted Stalin and he prepared himself two years for 1941 and then out of nowhere he attacked [Russia] and unfortunately the Russians were nowhere.

And especially in the Ukraine, General Blassov was pro German and he gave all

²August 23, 1939 Germany and Russia signed a non-aggression pact and a political agreement about Poland. Germany attacked Poland from the west on September 1, 1939. Russia invaded Poland from the east on September 17, 1939. On September 28, Germany and Russia signed an agreement dividing Poland between them.

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of about 4 or 5 divisions with the tanks, with everything, over to the Germans. But that's beside the point in my story. I had been in the army, I was *kaneinora*, very smart. I learned very easily to operate a tank and to be a little bit more than average from the *shaygetz*, from the Russian *Goy*. And they knew I was Jewish and they loved me and they always listened to me exactly when we went in to fight. They always listened to me and they gave me [unintelligible], like sergeant, and I became....

Q: A title. They gave you a title. And you became a leader.

A: And when our corps went in to fight, the Germans took us around once.

Q: They surrounded you.

A: And one Major of our corps and the General and everybody always came to ask me my opinion. What do you think? How can we get out of this trouble? And like always -- my wife knows in business -- I always *kaneinora*. I always gave a good *atezer*.

Q: Answer.

A: A good answer. I didn't know how it worked but it worked. There was a big fight near Riga, 8 kilometers from Riga in Latvia. We had been in very, very big trouble with a SS Division and about 160 tanks were involved on our side. Our major was killed, our colonel was killed, and many lieutenants. In Russia it was nothing to become a lieutenant in wartime. To get a medal you shoot down three tanks and you got a medal. But in my position I had to figure out how to work the fighting and how to get out of this trouble. Then they made me a lieutenant. In practice, not theory, I'm a lieutenant. In this particular battle when the major and the colonel were killed, they all agreed I should take over command because we were in a very bad position and all of us were in danger. I gave the command, and we lost a lot but I came out of it although I was shot. I

think I opened the top of my tank and I took out my binoculars to look where the German Tigers were. And they weren't far away. They were about 200-300 yards away, still looking at us. But I gave a command [unintelligible] -- right flank, left flank to go against them then [unintelligible] we were still going after them. We went. We fought very hard, but when I went out and looked where they were, I got shot here.

Q: Right in the back.

A: But, I had *koich* when I was young.

Q: You had "strength".

A: The strength. I went into the tank. I got the command from there.

Q: Your earphones.

A: The earphones. And half hour later I still was giving the commands.

Q: After your injury?

A: After my injury. I gave the command and the man who was sitting next to me, the driver of the tank, saw the blood running. He said, "Jenya -- in Russian they called me Jenya -- you get away. Give it over to another one, to the navigator." I said, no. I must take them out. In half an hour we picked them up, we came out, and then they made me a real official lieutenant. They took me to the hospital in Siberia. Then Olga Yakinov, a Jewish Sergeant, took this operation from thereon. And when the Germans got to Stalingrad and to Moscow, it was a very big decision for Stalin to take over and he took over command. Chuikov and Rokossovsky, the generals, had been very, very good particularly in those days, and they took over 11 or 12 divisions from Siberia. They were fighting for Japan, and they took over the whole [unintelligible] from there and the old people they sent there. And with the strength of this young division and Stalingrad they took the German Army. I had been in Stalingrad for two months

because my division was a special division, a breakthrough division. When there was a bad situation on the front line, they always sent us there because of my success. That's why the high command put us in a very, very bad position.

Q: The front line.

A: Front line all the time. And we did a good job. I am proud I'm alive, but I killed so many Germans. I saw how many I killed. They came to me and said, "Good Russ, Good Russ." When we took the Germans inside, to Russia's side, we used to ask them questions like you're asking now and I became, how you say...?

Q: You were an interpreter?

A: I was an interpreter for six months. The General asked, "Who speaks German?" I said I didn't speak German. I spoke Yiddish, Jewish, but I spoke German well enough. "Okay, Jenya, come here." I started to interview them, and we looked under the arms.

Q: Under the arms?

A: It was the SS [unintelligible].

Q: SS burnt in?

A: Yes.

Q: Burnt into the armpits.

A: Under the arm. Yes. That was the SS. I interviewed thousands. And we said, "SS to the right, the others to the left." All the SS were interviewed for one or two hours. Then in the [unintelligible] boom, boom, boom. There was no court, no giving them food or nothing. They didn't make a big deal out of them.

Q: In other words you had the SS on one side, and the other soldiers were on the other side.

A: They took the others to Russia to build Russia, to work in the camps. But the SS...

Q: Did you interview the SS?

A: Yes..

Q: What were some of the things you had to ask the SS?

A: One in particular I will never forget in all my life. He was Garnfelt.

Q: Garnfelt?

A: Ginfelt or Garnfelt. I forget exactly what the spelling of his name was. He had blond hair. He was about 36 or 37. And they called his name and he came to my table. I said, "Now sit down. What's your name?" And there was another man sitting.

Q: With his typewriter?

A: "Which division? How old are you? When did you join the SS?" I asked him all the questions. I asked, "Why did you join the SS?" He said, "Because they made me." I said, "Don't tell me stories. Nobody makes anybody do that. You are a young man." He said, "Yes, but I didn't kill the Jews." He saw I spoke German and he was so smart. He said, "I am sure I didn't kill the Jews. Believe me." I said, "Look, I believe you, but you tell me where, how, in which division, where you have been in Russian territory and Poland." And he told me the story where he had been and when I said he must go to the right...I'll never forget it. I'll always remember this moment that I was a *machiyah*.

Q: It was a pleasure.

A: He fell on his knees and he said, "Please, I have two little girls at home. I live in Boyton. My wife wants to see me and I'd like to see my family." I said, "Look. Didn't you think when you became an SS how many Jewish families, mothers and fathers, would want to see each other and the children? And you took them to the gas chambers. You killed them. You tore the children. You broke the legs. How could you do a thing like that?" He said, "But they told me to do it. I didn't

want to do it." I said, "Now, look out at the Germans here. They haven't got the SS here. But you made yourself, made the SS.³ I'm sorry. I can't help you. The last two hours you can eat." The Russians made a special kasha for them. He said, "But, please, you're the only man who can help me." I said, "Yes, in here I'm the only man who can help you. I can help you go with the same people who are going to the right." I took his address only because I wanted to see his family.

Q: Did you see his family?

A: Oh, yes. When they took him out, I didn't go to shoot because there was a special squad of 12 Russian officers. They took him away. And they took the papers where he had been, what division. That's all they wanted to know and....

Q: Out on the field. And they were shot.

A: Straight away. It's a waste of money to give him food and drink and that trouble. When we took Boyton, Germany I was stationed over there. It was a little bit far to travel but I took two days off and I traveled to this address that he gave me. Some of the Germans had been living fantastically, in beautiful homes. Mrs. Kaiser. Franz Kaiser. And on the door was written Franz Kaiser.

Q: Franz Kaiser was the one that you spoke to?

A: Yes. I pushed the button and the door opened and a beautiful woman opened the door. I said, "Don't worry. We are now here in Germany. Don't you worry. I'd like to talk to you." And then I saw the little kids, the little two girls. Straight away she made food and we sat down and she asked me one question at first, "How do you speak German?" I answered, "There are a lot of people in the world who speak German. A lot of people who speak Russian. But I didn't come to kill you. I didn't come to do harm to you. I would like to ask you a couple of

³Mr. Budansky is probably referring to the "SS" burned into his armpit.
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questions. Where is your husband?" "My husband is in the *Gefangnishauss* in Russia."

Q: In the jail.

A: In jail. I said, "Do you know it for sure?" "Yes, they took him. They told me here from the German [unintelligible]. They sent me a letter that he had been taken into Russia." I said, "Yes. How old is your husband?" "Thirty-five." "Do you like him?" "Yes, I love him." I said, "Do you know what your husband did in the war? Could you tell me where he was? In what army? What uniform did he wear?" She said, "He was in the SS but he didn't do anything wrong." And then the bedroom door opened and the child came out from the bedroom. In the bedroom was a picture with her together with him in his SS uniform. I said, "Look, Mrs. Kaiser, I'll make it very quick. I haven't a lot of time. I don't want to harm you. You didn't do anything wrong to me. I talked to your husband on the front line. I caught your husband. Your husband will never come home."

Q: I'm going to interrupt you. How old were you at the time?

A: I was exactly 23 years old. Exactly. Not in a month later.

Q: That's okay. That's fine.

A: I said, "Mrs. Kaiser, instead somebody will tell you that he's alive. I would like you to have an easy life. Don't join any more of these organizations. I wouldn't do you harm because I am not the government and I don't know in what you've been involved but believe me, forget about your husband. Your husband was a killer. Your husband was a SS. He admitted that somebody told him to do it." She started to cry a little bit. She said, "How did he look?" I told her he looked like that, like the picture in her bedroom, and that he begged me but I didn't have the power to save him and the children started to take out on the mother. Then

she begged me to come again to visit her for dinner, to get something more from me. But I was very aware of what she wanted. I said, "Thank you very much. I must leave the city because I'm not staying any more here." I can't forget the story.

Q: I have to ask you a question here.

A: Yes.

Q: When you walked into that apartment and you saw this woman with the two children did you, at any time, feel sympathy for this family?

A: No.

Q: In spite of what you knew about her husband.

A: Not at all. If I hadn't had a Jewish heart, if I had had the hatred I witnessed at the front line, I would have shot her because I shot a lot of Germans for no reason at all. Because our Jewish boys from Russia, Poland, [unintelligible], their hate was so much, madam, I can't explain to you. I have a captain, a friend of mine, who is in Israel and he cut here [unintelligible] and he said, "That's for my mother, that's for my father, that's for my brother, that's for my grandfather."

Q: He cut some Germans?

A: Yes. I saw it with my eyes and I told him, not because I was seeing it, I said, "The Russian General will see it." And he used to have a lot of medals and he said, "If the German General will tell me something I will shoot him too." He took absolutely no mercy at all. Children, women, men. When you're driving in a tank and you are taking a city and people are looking out through the windows, the Russians are arriving, you can't put on your...

Q: Rifle.

A: Rifle or your...from the town. The big....

Q: Gun.

A: Gun to shoot exactly in the flat. And he drank a little bit of vodka and said, "Jenya, I will tell you how I laugh at life," and he put on the gun and straight in the flats he took off a whole street. I said, "What are you doing?" He said, "Jenya, you forgot already." I said, "I couldn't [unintelligible]." I went through a lot, madam.

Q: Certainly. Certainly.

A: I went through a lot in Berlin. When we took Berlin, the Americans were not there. We took all of Berlin and we were waiting for the Americans. Four hours, five hours later we saw the tanks. The Americans came in and then the Americans came out and when we caught up with each other we started to kiss each other and we were drinking and singing. And the only thing I remember is one Yank told me, "God damn, you're good. You're good." And he gave me a bottle.

Q: [Laughing]. That was from a Yankee? From an American?

A: And he gave me a bottle. He was an American. He was with black on the top and he kissed me and I kissed him, because in those days we fought one war against the Germans. I was a Jew. I didn't care about the Russians at all but I fought because I was against the Germans. 95% of us didn't care if Russia won or lost, but the only thing was to go to the front line to see how to fight the Germans. And the biggest officers in the Russian army were the Jewish kids. You wouldn't believe how many I met in Berlin from different divisions, not only lieutenants. Like I told you it was nothing in the war to be a lieutenant. They made a lieutenant like that, but captains, majors, colonels, generals...a lot of them Jewish.

Q: I'm going to go back to the SS interrogation. When you talked to the SS....

A: I can see him there in my eyes. In the night my wife asks what's wrong. I see

him and the major next to me says, "What is he saying to you?" I say, "He's begging me for his life." He said, "Send him away." I said, "I want to get more out of him." He says, "Okay." And in the line were more people and there were people [unintelligible] the SS. They couldn't run away because the Russians were standing with a big automatic and looking after them.

Q: Sure. Did you talk to any of the other SS?

A: Yes.

Q: Any other similar experiences?

A: Some admitted. Some didn't want to admit. Some said we saved a lot of Jewish people. Like when we went into Germany, every German said, "Oh, we've been very good to the Jewish people." And that was a fact of life. They wanted to save themselves. What I want to say is the Americans were too good to them in the first two, three months. It could be a different story if the Russians would have had the full end of what to do with them. They would have cleaned them out and sent them completely to Siberia and the German Reich, the Germans, would be completely disappeared from the next 10-12 centuries. If only there had been no Nuremberg -- a big deal to give them "life" and to make a big story for all the world to know. We are Jewish. Today in Israel we'll kill two Arabs and the Arabs will kill a thousand Jews and they say the Jews are wrong. That's the way it was after W.W.I. The Jewish people wanted to go to emigrate to America, to Australia, to Canada and it was always very hard. Why? Because they are Jewish. But within half an hour the Embassy gave other people -- criminals or people who had been criminals -- a permit to go to Australia or to New Zealand. The Jewish family would have to go from one Embassy to another and they were fighting to go emigrate to another country. I remember because I went. For me it was easy because my people were in New Jersey. My

story is that we defected.

Q: I want to get to that but we want to go back and move from your experience in the army. When you rounded up the SS, you became an interpreter?

A: Yes.

Q: When did you visit the ghettos?

A: When we went into the ghettos...we didn't stay there too long. We stayed one to two days because we were a moving division. We couldn't go in and stay with them and [unintelligible].

Q: Did you purposely go there? Did you know that you were going to a ghetto?

A: Oh, yes. An hour before that we knew that there was a ghetto at this and this point because when a division is moving into a city, we have a map. We know everything that's in the city -- where is the factories, where is something like any military. We knew everything. But we didn't know exactly how big, what is...we knew there was a camp.

Q: Were you given orders when you went into the ghetto?

A: Yes. We were given orders not to give them food. We were given orders not to go in because there were electrical wires and things like that around. We were told not to touch anything. We were told we could look but only the medical corps, the generals, and the big people could go in to see what they could do. But like a Jew, like a *chutzpah*, my old friends and I pushed ourselves in. One survivor was standing on the [unintelligible], I remember, in Riga. He was so skinny that he couldn't even open his mouth and I wanted to give him something to put in his mouth. And one woman, a Russian nurse, caught me. "Mr. Lieutenant, please don't do it. First [unintelligible]. There is infection." First they cleaned them out then they lay them down on special medical...like you take an ambulance....

Q: Stretcher.

A: Stretchers. And first they washed him and then they gave him some injections, not here, but here....

Q: In the back. Under the scapula bone?

A: Yes, I remember, because they couldn't find the veins.

Q: Because they were so starved.

A: That's why I have the nightmares. It's not only for my family. Sometimes my wife says it's been how long, how many years has it been? And I can see where I am going in. I am driving the tank. I can see the people dying and I am going out...over the people with the tank. I can see things and I am fortunate that I can still be a normal man after all this. I have been shot five times. I have been in the hospital, the front, the hospital, the front. That means it was a very bad experience for me and I thank God that I am alive, for I have nobody in the world. I got my wife and one daughter living in the United States, married to a Long-Islander boy, and he is finishing medical school. She is expecting a baby in August. That's when we decided, after 29 years living in that beautiful country [Australia], that maybe we can adjust to living with them together.

Q: Once you are a grandpa you will adjust.

A: Yes. He wants to come to Emory. His parents want him in New York somewhere, or he wants somewhere in Florida or Miami. I don't know. But he wants very much to come to Emory. He's brilliant. He finished his Ph.D. Now he is finishing his M.D. He's the number one. He got special awards from the professors, from the medical school. He is very brilliant.

Q: Gives you lots to be proud of.

A: I'm proud. I'm very proud. I'm proud I'm alive. I'm proud of what I went through. That's my wife.

Q: Oh, beautiful.

A: My son-in-law, that's my daughter.

Q: Wonderful, wonderful. Everything you went through is all worth it.

A: Yes. In Austria, when I talked to my friends, the Hungarian people, who didn't go through this...and when we would go to a party, and we would go out and tell stories, I would tell them, "I have been in the concentration camp, but I didn't go through what you went through." And that's a fact. I went through a lot in ... I didn't wish to be in a concentration camp. I was very happy I was in the front line and I came out alive, because a lot of Jewish kids, in the thousands, died. Again, I was the lucky one. My tank 22 times was battling on the time I was in the tank. I was the luckiest to get out and all of them were dying.

Q: It's hard to believe when you think about it.

A: When I start to think about it, when the Rabbi came into the hospital and gave me the last words and I'm dying...the doctors said a heart like that they had never seen in their life, so they took out [unintelligible]. When they wanted... it came water. From the water became thickness.

Q: Thickened fluid. From the lungs.

A: It was too late, and the professor said he couldn't help it. And one doctor came in and made a hole and put a drain, and then they kept me, and I went [unintelligible]. I was lying about a month on oxygen, of course. Yes.

Q: The will to live.

A: The will to live and after what I had gone through I said I must live. Because then I was involved in the Irgun Zvi Leumi.

Q: Yes, the Irgun.

A: I was involved in Europe in one, because they took us. This Irgun was very interested in our people -- all the Russians coming out from the army, the

partisans. They had done a lot of jobs in Austria and in England.

Q: Irgun. Yes.

A: Yes.

Q: There is so much here and I am trying in my mind to move with you from one step to the next. You started to go into the ghettos, and you went in. Through the military you were given instructions by your higher-ups as to what to do when you got into a ghetto, and those were very clear instructions. Medical instructions.

A: Yes, there was a medical instruction for everybody not to go in, and not to touch even one man or one woman.

Q: Not to give food. Did they tell you why?

A: They don't explain too much to you. They don't want to give you why, what, where. When we arrived, we took [unintelligible]. We took a camera. We took anything. And when we went in, they told us straight away, nobody can go next to their gates or around to talk to anybody or touch anything. "You can see, you can look, you can try to talk, but from far away." Then the medical corps went in -- about 20 or 30 people, women and men, dressed with masks and everything. They took stretchers with ambulances. The minute they came in, they put people on stretchers, and then I remember I saw some drugs they gave some people on the tongue. Drops. What it was I couldn't explain.

Q: I am comparing now what the American forces knew when they went into the camp as to what to do as compared to what you seemed to have known when you went in. Do you remember many people in the ghettos dying as a result of getting food that they should not have gotten?

A: I could not explain it that they [unintelligible] not to get food. I would say the Russians were so occupied at the time and the people I saw dying there in the

concentration camp were dying there when we liberated them. They were so excited. Some of them died maybe from excitement when they saw that some people had come to liberate them. I am sure they didn't know what army it was. Some of them only knew we were opening the gates and people were coming in to see them. I am sure a lot of women...I didn't want to explain how the other women were looking when I saw them.

Q: Explain it.

A: Somebody was naked, and some of them were mentally. Absolutely mentally.

A: Mentally ill?

A: Even when you asked them what their name was they didn't know. They were shouting and they were hysterical, and they didn't know exactly what they were talking about. But after we left, the Russians or the government or the medical corps looked after them. But a lot of them died, and at the same time [unintelligible]I saw a lot of them just in daze. They came in and died.

Q: Did you see any guards when you came in?

A: No.

Q: They had already gone?

A: When the Russians came into our city, there were no guards. In the place in Rovno where my family was involved, the guards were not there. But I met ten families in the shul⁴ and when I came to them they told me they knew the people, not the Germans, but the Polish people in the town, and they robbed them more than the Germans. They gave me some names and where they lived and told me I could find some Jewish goods there. The Jewish people used to have nice things. They used to have the nice silver and nice things, so I went to catch them. But in those days, in Rovno, I couldn't shoot them for every

⁴Synagogue

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government was there. I could only give them over to the authorities. I found the materials, I found the forks, I found the shoes, the boots, the mink. I found everything put away which people told me about. I took it away. I took the family away, and I gave them over to the secret police. They were going to Siberia, and who knows if they would stay alive or not. In those days...not today, because today the hate is against the Jewish people, but in those days, it didn't matter if you were Jewish or not Jewish. If you fought for the country, for Russia, and you fought against the Germans, and you found a man like that cooperating with the Germans, he was a traitor, like a Russian runaway from the Army. He has no right to go to court. The court is on the spot. Boom and you're gone. You know what I mean? The Russians allowed no appeal. It was a different kind of ...

Q: Completely different political situation.

A: Completely different altogether. There is no coming [unintelligible] and saying paragraph this and paragraph that.

Q: Don't you need a convention?

A: No conventions, and no things like that. When I came out here, there was this man murdering people here in Atlanta. They gave him the chair and the night before, one woman was saying, "He is a good man and he must live." Over there, there is no such thing as he must live. He killed a man. He goes. No paper, writing when it was, how it was. Forget it. Completely different mentality of life.

Q: I am going to go down the different ghettos now. We will start with the Vilna Ghetto.

A: The Vilna Ghetto.

[End of first tape. Conversation continues on new tape as follows.]

Q: Soup. That's all.

A: They got soup and the only people in charge was the medical corps and the big people who made their report: the government, [unintelligible] supplies with the liberated. That's the people who were taking the names. All this informality goes on: from which city you are and not very friendly. They kissed them when...some children were very, very strong and very good; some Nazis took a child and killed him. I saw it with my eyes. They were very attached to some people. I didn't say all the Russians, but some of them were very....to see a tragedy like that, they had been very, very attached.

Q: What did you do? Did you go out and hug the Jews? Did you kiss any of the people?

A: I kissed...I took one boy who was about 16 years old, maybe, and I took him around. He was *kaneinora*. In this kind of position he was a little bit [unintelligible] still on him.

Q: There was still some meat left on him.

A: Yes, a little bit. And I took him around and I taught him Yiddish. And he knew since I was Yiddish, he followed me and he caught me like this.

Q: Hugged you.

A: He hugged me. I said where is your father. He said no father, no mother, nobody. I said in Yiddish, "Don't worry. We will take care of you. Maybe they're still alive and in different camps. Maybe you'll find your uncles, your father, your mother. Don't worry.." He said, "Please come again." I said, "I'm sorry son. I still have to fight. I can't help it. I would love to stay with you. I would love to see to help you more." But the only help I could offer was to talk

Yiddish to them. The biggest thing for me was to talk to them in Yiddish and say [unintelligible] “I can see what you went through. Don’t worry. The Germans will never come again.”

Q: Your way of helping.

A: It’s the mind...it’s the psychological thing. They still were thinking the Germans were coming so it mentally destroyed....

Q: That you’ve killed them.

A: Exactly. I told him don’t worry. There is no chance anymore the Germans will come again. You are free.

Q: The best news you could have given them.

A: The best news I could give...knock on wood. The best news I could give the women “you’re free” in Yiddish and when I told them in Yiddish they were very, very happy.

Q: Sure. That was the best medicine for them at the time. I am sure. You went into the Riga Ghetto.

A: Riga Ghetto.

Q: Similar thing?

A: Similar thing.

Q: Anything unusual happen there?

A: The Riga Ghetto was a very clean place, fortunately, for the Jewish people. It wasn’t dirty like in other places. There were barracks, but in better condition than in other ones. They caught two people -- Latvians, not Germans -- still standing on the other side with no gun, nothing, but they pointed at them then the Russians caught them.

Q: Those were Latvian guards.

A: Latvian guards of the camp. They told us that they would say they’ve been good

to us, but actually they were worse than the Germans. But these two Latvians were thinking that they could get out of the trouble. They were young men, 27-28. We went in. The same thing. I made myself clear. Not just me. With me was another 25 Jewish officers. We went in, [unintelligible]. We couldn't go where the medical corps was doing their job. We could only go where they had already been and some of them were lying on the...

Q: On the stretchers.

A: I said, "I am a Yid. Take it easy. Don't worry. They will take care of you. You will get food in another hour. You will get food." They said, "Oh, God told you to give the food to me."

Q: That God should give out to you.

A: I sent another boy, my friends. That was our help. Because actually to give them food was against the law. The Russians couldn't do anything. I couldn't give them anything. I had the power to take any meat from any farm and bring in as much as they wanted, but I couldn't do it. They handled it. They took them away. They put them in places....

Q: But you gave them the reassurance that....

A: The reassurance that the Germans wouldn't come any more. For me, personally, I was very happy to save children. I saw children. Some children were still with the mothers. That was to me...because I left two young sisters. I didn't cry but I cried inside. I cried in myself because like I say I was an Army man. Before I went in, I thought like that, to take my strength to talk to them. Then they took away the uniform from them. They didn't let them go. The man who worked in the medical corps took them on a stretcher, spritzing with disinfectant, then they brought some things to dress them in, and put them back in a different one.

When everything was ready, only two guys who had been there looked up at the

medics...

Q: So really the Russian Army was very well organized in how they looked after these people.

A: Organized but mind you every battalion and every corps used to have only 25% of its people looking after our people, the wounded people. A lot of women were involved in the Russian Army in this kind of business and they were professional. I must say that. A nurse -- you call it a nurse, in Russia we call it sister -- was as good as a doctor in Russia. It was very strict how you became a nurse. They had good hearts. Apart from everything, politically speaking, what was going on in the world in those days, if it hadn't been for those nurses [unintelligible] the Americans, not one Jew in 2, 3, or 4 weeks would have been alive. Believe me.

Q: The Rovno Ghetto was where your family was?

A: When we took Breslau, we had already gone over the German border. I got shot in the leg. A little scratch. But I told the medical corps I was too weak. I asked the major if he would give me two weeks because I wanted to see where my parents were. He said O.K. and gave me the papers. When I came to Rovno, I went to the shul on Bonotovsky. The street is Bonotovsky. I went to the biggest shul. I saw 10 families sleeping in there. Two girls, Ariva Spalberg and Sipa Spalberg, went to school with me in Rovno and they started to kiss me. They couldn't believe I was still alive. I started for the first time to cry because these two girls had been in school with me and the first thing I asked was if they knew where my family was. The oldest, Sipa, told me they were in Israel and both were married. Ariva told me, "Don't take it very hard. I know you are a very tough guy and you've been on the front line but your father and mother and sisters and all you family are lying with our families. We will take you there

and show you. The graves are still not covered.” So God give us, all the Israel and the Jewish people, his own [unintelligible]. I took a [unintelligible] [sounds like mignon] and we went there. It’s after the jail. In Rovno there’s a big jail on the main road. Three miles beyond the jail are some hills and on the hills the Germans separated the men and women, lined them up, took their clothes, and shot them. They fell in the graves and they didn’t bother to cover the graves. When I came up on the hill with the mignon [unintelligible].

Q: Where did you get the mignon? From the military? From the synagogue?

A: From the synagogue the people left. It was enough. The people came from different little towns. I begged them to come because it was a little far to go. About 12 miles. I took a big Russian truck, and I took them.

Q: You were how old at that time?

A: 23. Everything happened that year because 1945 the war ended, and in 1945 the Russians took the most cities. In 1944 we were still attacking but in January, February, March of 1945 I bring all the stories. As quick as the Germans were going to Russia, the Russians were moving quicker against the Germans. I was standing and looking and asking myself, what can I do? I said kaddish. I saw maybe a mile of graves with children, women, next to the men. Not covered. I saw it with my eyes. We were there an hour, and about half a mile away was a cottage where a *goy* lived. He saw all the people coming and he came and said to me, “Yes, I witnessed the Germans doing this. They took off the clothing, they took off the jewelry, everything. They even took the gold out of the teeth.”

Q: This was a ghetto.

A: Yes. Rovno.

Q: There was starvation, I’m sure. It must have been there for a while.

A: Yes. And they took all the Jewish people there from the little towns around

Rovno, and they killed them all. Those that left with the partisans, like these ten families, and who went into the woods survived. But people who couldn't help themselves...like I told you there were people who didn't want to run. They were thinking, what can the Germans do to us? We've done nothing against the Germans.

Q: They didn't want to believe it.

A: They didn't want to believe it. Some of them used to have nice homes and businesses, and families and they couldn't believe for a moment that they had to leave everything and run. That killed a lot of people.

Q: It couldn't happen to me.

A: It couldn't happen to me. You're right, madam. But I was a young man and I knew what was happening there. I knew I had to run because I would have been the first to be shot. I can't still believe, where was God.

Q: That's what I'm going to come to.

A: Do you know what I mean?

Q: I know exactly what you mean.

A: That's how I came now to my belief. I don't know what happened. I was young. I didn't finish my schooling. It came to me [unintelligible] to leave my family and I led a different kind of Russian life. I went in the Army and fought and was in hospitals, wondering where my father and mother and sisters were. It happened so quickly that it was like [unintelligible] happening to me. A lot of people like me went through thoughts like that.

Q: Where is God? What is your feeling about God? What is your belief about God? What is your belief about religion?

A: What I believe about Judaism is that all Jewish people don't need to have so many ceremonies or keep extreme kosher. They should all keep together

[unintelligible] in one way.

Q: Not to divide.

A: Not to divide among us. To think that because you have a yarmulke and because you go to Beth Jacob shul you are better than another one is the worst thing. Because after all I went through this year...I came from a city where people were poor when they went there but became millionaires. They have already forgotten what happened to their fathers and mothers. They don't want to know about other people. They don't want to know about Israel. They don't want to know about their friends. Materialism has caused these people to become like animals after what we went through in life. Only I can say...I have, for example, a Chevrolet. In Sydney they don't go for that car. One woman told me to buy a Mercedes. I wouldn't buy a Mercedes because of what I went through with the Germans if the Mercedes were made of gold. Another woman [unintelligible] is driving a Mercedes, but they have gotten into a lot of financial difficulties.

Q: Slaves to materialism.

A: And they're buying the Mercedes and they have big swimming pools with marble around them. The husband works hard. He borrows money, anything to make buying something the same. Why should it happen somebody comes in here and says I can't pray. I can't because I went through a bad life and I can't pray. I don't think there's a [unintelligible] that I can't pray. It's my opinion. I'm telling you my opinion.

Q: That's why I'm asking you. I want to hear your opinion.

A: My opinion is that the Jewish people have mostly forgot. Americans, Australians, New Zealanders, Canadians -- it doesn't matter which part of the world. We forgot who we are. But life is short and life is so valued for

everybody to think for one thing we are Jewish we must stick together. Why do I go to temple? Why do I go to Beth Jacob? I like the same [unintelligible] there. I like the same because I went through...I know what they went through. I don't want to make different.

Q: The most important thing for you is unity.

A: It's unity for the Jewish people. [Unintelligible] goes to a private school or goes to a big college. [Unintelligible] is finishing medical school. To me he's the same human as a boy that cannot even finish college. Because he's Jewish I must see this man the same as my son.

Q: Apply for unity among the Jewish people.

A: All of us forgot and it can come again. I'm predicting it. I'm predicting all the time and my wife tells me my head works all the time. I predicted everything exactly. I predicted [unintelligible] will come the biggest [unintelligible] in 18 months. I don't know who would be involved. It can come again.

Q: Based upon what you've gone through that's...you see things in a very different way.

A: The Jewish people are a target in one way I would like to tell you. In the United States, if something bad happens they target the Jewish people. That's what I want them to understand.

Q: The first target is the Jewish people. We didn't get to the Warsaw Ghetto yet.

A: The Warsaw Ghetto was a tragedy. When we took Warsaw, I had been on the front line there. [Unintelligible]. Absolutely nothing.

Q: No human....

A: No human beings. Only bodies. They fought up until the very last second, last minute, as long as a 7-year-old boy could hold a gun. Some of them gave

themselves up. But they died because the Germans shot them. There's no doubt about that. When we went through, I saw there was nothing to see, only [unintelligible].

Q: Leveled. Now there are garden apartments there in the Warsaw Ghetto.

A: Beautiful apartments. My friend went to visit Poland 8 years ago. He said I wouldn't recognize it.

Q: It's true. And the Lvov Ghetto.

A: There was about 800-1000 people in Lvov.

Q: When you went into that ghetto, were there the same instructions, same medical care, same facilities...?

A: Same facilities. But there weren't many facilities. We only looked after the people for a while before the real medical corps took over. Because [unintelligible] like in Riga, we were stationed there only to make sure the Germans didn't shoot again.

Q: For protection.

A: Then when everything settled down and we moved away, the normal people took over. But when I was there in Lvov many people I saw I didn't think had much chance of surviving. Some of them were very, very [unintelligible], but 1% was a little bit...you could talk to them. They could tell you the stories, and they were kind to me because I told them I was Yiddish. They brought the Jews to the Warsaw Ghetto and from there they took them to another concentration camp.

Q: A transfer point.

A: The story was the women, the young girls. They were very badly....

Q: In the Lvov Ghetto?

A: Yes. The Germans raped them. Not so much the Germans but the Poles. The

German *Volkdeutsch* we called them. They took advantage of this kind of thing. In every part of Poland were the *Volkdeutsch*. Not the real Pole, but the *Volkdeutsch* took advantage.

Q: How did they get that name *Volkdeutsch*?

A: *Volk* is the people. *Deutsch* is German. When they left Germany before the second world war, they emigrated to Poland on the other side, emigrated to Czechoslovakia, emigrated to Russia. Then the name became a word for everybody. They were happy to call themselves *Volkdeutsch*.

Q: But it describes a certain type of people.

A: The hair. Blonde. You can see their eyes. Maybe 1 in a thousand had dark hair. But their eyes were mostly white. I saw them in the [unintelligible] in Poland.

Q: But they always seemed to be the people that were accused of doing the worst.

A: Yes they did. I'm telling you the truth. With the help of the *Volkdeutsch* the Germans had an easier job of finding the Jews, because all the people were hiding in places where the Germans wouldn't find them for three years. They went to the Germans and said here they are, and they became big men. They gave them maybe a raincoat or money. They really helped to kill a lot of Jews. The same happened in Czechoslovakia and Hungary.

Q: All *Volkdeutsch*.

Q: All *Volkdeutsch*. In Hungary they called them [unintelligible]. In Poland they called them the *Volkdeutsch*.. They were a special people. They were waiting for this. The anti-Semitism was very bad.

Q: You spoke about the rape of the women in Lvov. We hear many stories about the fear of the Russians when they came when they did so much raping.

A: That's true but they didn't rape a concentration camp girl. When the Germans took a Jewish girl into any camp...they told me they raped my sister. The ten

families that were left in the shul told me the Germans...she was beautiful. She was something special, and they told me they took her away in a different way. They said I'm sure they raped her. The same thing happened to a lot of girls even in the concentration camps. The SS would drink and sit around at night and say why not? They're going to be killed. We'll keep them for a couple of months.

Q: Use them.

A: Use them. And they did. There's no question about it. One old Jewish man told me they raped all the [unintelligible]. In Yiddish he told me. It was shocking. There was shouting from the SS barracks. But what can you do? You go and tell them, you get shot right away. They raped them, they came out, and they went to the girls. Fortunately, among these people there were the real [unintelligible].

Q: The lucky ones.

A: Because if the war had gone on another month or so and we hadn't liberated them, I'm sure a lot would have died from starvation. The Germans knew the Russians were coming. We were coming so quickly they didn't have time to kill them. That's why there were the lucky ones. We couldn't catch the German tanks. We were running after them like anything. They were far away. That's why they were lucky. It was like the winter in 1944 in Russia when the Germans were frozen to the ground. It was lucky for us that the Germans were running too quickly. That is what saved a lot of our people.

Q: Tell me about Maidanek.

A: Maidanek was a concentration camp.

Q: What did you see when you came into Maidanek?

A: When I came into Maidanek I saw the ovens, I saw the graves.

Q No guards?

A: No guards were left. Not one. Everything was like...I can't say exactly. It was shocking. It was terrible.

Q: Survivors?

A: Not many. I can't say exactly but something like [unintelligible]. I didn't count them. Believe me, when you're young and you see a thing like that and you know already what our Jewish people are going through, what good does it do to count? If only to see the faces, only to see the way they're standing. You don't see a person. You see a dead person talking to you. It's enough to make you so emotional that you can't even ask what happened.

Q: The words leave you.

A: The words leave me. Speechless. I did talk to a couple in Yiddish, but it was the worst thing I ever saw. The children. Some bodies. Not even burned yet. Just bodies lying around in the barracks. The bodies were lying on the bunks. I saw it. We went out quickly because of the smell. The medical corps told us to quickly leave because they didn't want us to get sick. It was a very dangerous thing. But for me, the Jewish people in the military, it was very...

Q: Did you talk to each other about it in the military?

A: Yes. We came to a conclusion when we went over the German border...like I told you what my Jewish friend, the captain, did. He cut the pieces. He was in a big hurry to get to the German border.

Q: He couldn't wait to get there.

A: He couldn't wait a minute to get over the border. When we went over the border, there was a big fight with a German SS division. They sent their best division against us. When we went into the German cities, we made a mess out of them.

Q: What did you do when you got in there?

A: The first thing I did was like my friends did. We shot German men and women without any orders. The order came from the commander “we don’t care what you do as long as you eliminate the Germans.” The Germans were suffering like the Jews. They were killing the Germans like the Russians did the Jews. I was a Russian soldier. I fought for my Jewish friends, but the Russian soldier was fighting for the...they burned their country. They killed the German people and they made a mess. If the Americans had done the same thing with us, it would have been a good job.

Q: Did you talk to any Germans?

A: A lot. They would say “I saved the Jewish people.” They didn’t say things like “I saw the Germans take people away from the camp. I saw the German SS take them away.” No one told me that. What they said was “Oh, I loved the Jews. I saved them. I took them in. I gave them food.”

Q: So you talked to them. What did you do with all this hate and passion?

A: What can I do? I said, “You are a German. You are responsible for our people.” We [unintelligible] a lot of homes. We took a lot of goods. Because we were stationed there we took a lot of flats. That was the job of the officers of the Army. They threw a German out of his house, took what they could, and in 10 minutes they were done. We did a lot of bad things, but there came a time to settle down and we couldn’t kill them. [Unintelligible] what is enough is enough. To rape or to kill them was like I am talking to you. You could have done it if you wanted to. There would be no charges against you. A general wouldn’t come and say why did you kill the Germans?

Q: Would a Jewish soldier rape a German girl?

A: A lot. A lot. Not one, not ten, a lot. When we took Berlin, the word came

down from Stalin that for 24 hours you could do whatever you wanted. You could rape. You could kill. You could steal. You could do what you wanted in 24 hours. You could take all the [unintelligible] into Russia, all the goods, all the shops. Can you image the Russians? They put watches on. They went into the shops....

Q: From the fingers up to the shoulders they put watches on.

A: They were very primitive.⁵ In those days 50% of the Russians who came from big cities acted badly, but the ones from the little towns were very primitive.

Q: Would you say that those soldiers from the towns and the villages reacted differently from the soldiers that were from...

A: From the towns they were much worse. The more primitive they were the more Germans they killed. I saw it on the front line. There was a primitive guy who had no schooling. He went to the front line with his rifle and said, "I will take all of them." But the ones who weren't primitive put more thought into their actions -- how can I do it, should I risk my life, do I want to risk my life.

Q: To figure it out first.

A: Yes.

Q: When you went into the labor camp near Lodz, anything in particular you remember from that?

A: There was a little town, a small village. They kept them there. Maybe 350 or 400 people. They looked exactly like they did in other ghettos. They had been worked. They worked in a camp. They took them [unintelligible] they told me.

Q: A factory.

A: Factory work.

Q: What kind of a factory? Glass factory. Cement?

⁵Mr. Bundansky uses the word "primitive" several times in this interview. He is referring to the Russian soldiers from the small villages who were not well-educated.

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- A: Cement factory. One man was sitting with me and I gave him a drink of water. I asked him what kind of work he did. He said they took us in trucks and we mixed cement and we made cement. But he said we did it to survive. I asked what they gave them to eat. He said nothing. With a little water and [unintelligible] they made soup, and a piece of bread. Tough. The German bread. He said thank God I could eat it because if I couldn't have eaten it I wouldn't have survived. That was the truth. To the people who survived in these little ghettos came a power -- they dared to do things with the Germans standing in front of them all the time with a rifle. A lot of them survived very well. I would say about 25% of the people I saw that I remember weren't in good condition, but you could talk to them. They were tired...
- Q: But better than the camps.
- A: Yes.
- Q: In the Russian military, was there any opportunity to talk about what you had seen in the various camps with the higher officers? Did you ever get together and really talk about what you had seen?
- A: We didn't get together like in a convention, but when we were having breakfast around the tank, we talked to the *goyen* -- not the Jewish men -- and they had the same opinion. "Bandits! Murderers! We didn't do enough to the city [unintelligible]."
- Q: After they had seen the ghettos they talked about it and had the same reaction?
- A: The same reaction as us.
- Q: This were non-Jews and they knew the ones in the ghetto were Jewish?
- A: Of course. They didn't call them Jews. They called them Hebrews. In Poland they called them *Jit*⁶. In Russia you were not allowed at that time to called them

⁶Phonetic spelling.

Jit. You had to say Hebrew. The first time you said *Jit*, you got a month in jail, if there were witnesses. The third time the same person called you *Jit* you got six months or a year. That was when I was there.

Q: The person that called you was the one that got 6 months or a year.

A: Yes. If you called me a "*Jit*," with two witnesses there are no accusations. Straight away. Especially in the military. If someone were to call me a "*Jit*" he wouldn't have a chance, even if he were a general or anybody. I could take out my pistol, put it in his mouth, and shoot him.

Q: Nobody would accuse you.

A: Nobody would accuse me of anything. He was a traitor, I would say. He signed the paper. Two of my friends were witnesses and nobody could do anything.

Q: That's changed.

A: Changed a lot.

Q: So you really had a lot of chance to talk about what you had seen in the various ghettos. Was that helpful that you were able to talk about it?

A: It was very helpful for the people I talked to. They saw us and they thought that God had come. [Unintelligible]

Q: No. In terms of being helpful when you talked about it with each other in the military, one soldier to another.

A: Very helpful. It was shocking. They wondered how a human being could do that to another human being. They became very emotional when they saw the dead children. It doesn't matter if it was a *goy*. If they saw the children dying or dead he became more aggressive.

Q: You were a soldier. You saw a lot of death in the military. Forget about the camp situation which I know is very special. What was the difference between the death that you saw in the military and the death and starvation that you saw

in a ghetto or a camp?

A: In the military you're fighting for a cause. We were fighting against the Germans. If you survive, you're O.K. I fight. I'm not in a concentration camp.

Q: I'm talking about your fellow Russians that were killed.

A: They were very emotional when a Russian fellow was killed.

Q: Was the emotion different between...?

A: No. The same. For them it was all human beings. They didn't say that it was special in the Jewish camps, because a lot of Russians were in the camps. You understand me? Not in every camp, but there were Russians, *goyen*, in some of the camps because they didn't cooperate with the Germans. That's why the Russians took it very seriously. They took it the same way emotionally. When they would go into another town they would try their best to take advantage of them. And they did.

Q: Was the Russian soldier who was of a lower rank have the same reaction as the soldier of a higher rank? The medical corps or...

A: No. The primitive ones went after the regular soldiers, the German Army. When the primitive ones saw the camp, they looked around and said "How horrible. Too bad.:" Then after half an hour they forgot. But the more intelligent man, the one who knew more about what was going on, reacted differently altogether. The reaction was more than the man....

[End of tape. Conversation resumes on new tape as follows]

A: The story is nothing. My story is that I am alive.

Q: That's the story unto itself.

A: Not to be in a concentration camp, and to survive what I went through in the

operations in the front line. And to see the open graves of my people lying between the Jewish people. And not to know where they were. The life was to me sometimes what I am, what I'm doing and where I go and what I will do, what can I do? When we took Berlin, I was already in [unintelligible] second group in [unintelligible] they gave me the papers. You can do what you like, you can go back to Russia. You can't say you don't want to go to Russia. But when I took the papers they gave me a little money. I couldn't have lived on that for one week. I have a story about when I was in Berlin for the 5 months. If you know the history, there was international police, military police. French, English, Russian, and American. All four were in a jeep going around Berlin with red armbands on keeping order. And once I was involved in that. We went around in the night to see what we could do and we saw a little bit of light on the fifth floor. Lights weren't allowed in the night. It was still wartime blackout. We went up to the fifth floor, and a man with white hair, in his 50's, opened the door. And I said, "Can you show me your papers?" I saw a lot of cute girls and boys in green uniforms of the *chalutz*. I already knew what was going on. And he said no, they're from the concentration camp and he wanted to bring them to Palestine. I said yes and my heart goes like that and next to me was a *goy*, an officer. I said to him, "Sergeant, do me a favor. Go downstairs and look out the door and see if something is happening there." I did that to get rid of him so I could talk to the man. And when I got rid of him, the man took me in the middle and started to explain things to me. He spoke not perfect Russian but good Russian. He was a Czech himself. I said to him in Russian, "I want to tell you and don't get shocked. I am a Yid." He looked at me like that. I didn't look Jewish when I was in uniform. "You are kidding," he said. He talked to everybody and they came around me. I said, "I haven't got much time because I

got rid of this fellow, but he will come up and I must make a report.” He gave me all the details and he said, “Please, if you have another Yiddish boy, come to me. I am living at this address with my wife and children. Come on Shabbos. He was from the Haganah.⁷ They already worked the Haganah.

Q: This was in Berlin in 1945.

A: End of 1945. I said O.K. and he gave me the address. The Russians liked to steal things. I was no better than the Russians. I was young. On the street was a Czechoslovakian car, and we took it and went to this address. It was a Friday night. I took another two Jewish boys with me. There was *knadel*⁸ soup, there was liver. Liver and *tzibele*⁹. We spoke in Yiddish. It was a *machiyah*.¹⁰ I said, “What you doing with these kids? Where are they from?” They said, “They are from Poland, from Czechoslovakia, from the national army. They defected. We are taking them on Aliyah Bet.”¹¹ I had not heard of Aliyah Bet yet. I said, “It’s okay, but how are you taking them out?” He said, “Don’t worry, everything is arranged. We can’t sit too long, or they will know where we are.” I said, “You must go, and we will meet again. He said, “Please, if you decide sometimes to go to Israel I can fix it for you.” I said, “We are in Berlin and we can go anywhere we like. We don’t need to run away.” He said, “But I can help you go to a place where it is nice and there the Jewish Haganah will take care of you.” About three weeks later we left the Russians in Berlin and we went to Vienna. We saw a lot of Yiddish people coming in from Poland, from Czechoslovakia, and they got beautiful apartments. The American Joint¹² (JDC)

⁷The mainstream Jewish underground in Palestine

⁸Dumplings

⁹Onions

¹⁰Joy

¹¹Endeavor by which the Jewish community in Palestine tried to save the Jews of Europe by bringing about the illegal immigration of Jews to Palestine

¹²merican Jewish Joint Distribution Committee -- a Jewish welfare organization

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was there. There were organizations already looking after them. And I saw the [unintelligible] and dollars and gold and people making money. I was a little bit anxious to see what we could do, so I said to my friend, let's do something. Then I started selling chocolate, sugar, and Gillettes which was a very hard thing to get.

Q: Shaving?

A: We made a little bit of money, but the Haganah was there asking when we wanted to go to Israel. And I remember my father liked Jabotinsky.¹³ I thought there must be some Jabotinsky organization. I said I would like to meet these people sometimes. They asked, "What are you ? A [unintelligible]?" I said, "I don't know what I am, but I would like to talk to them. They are Jewish people too." They gave me the address and I went to them. They took us with both hands, and we joined them. We joined the Irgun Zve Leumi to have a lot of big jobs.

Q: The Irgun?

A: The Irgun put a lot of bombs to put the English against the English. Because the English and the people who they took to Cyprus, they sent them back all the time. And we gave them hell and a lot of trouble, to give them back all the things that they are doing to our people. And then came....

Q: You were operating out of Austria then with the Irgun?

A: Yes. Austria. The main office was in Paris. We were operating from Austria, from a camp that all the Jewish people were in which was under the Americans. It was a secret organization. The Irgun helped a lot, and then they wanted us to take everyone to Israel, but when time goes on and you get older...and then a lot

¹³Vladimir Jabotinsky was the leader of the Revisionists division within the overall Zionist movement in the 1930's. He called for the prompt establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine and proposed to Britain a plan for evacuating the masses of Polish Jewry to Palestine.

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of people came from Hungary and from Czechoslovakia. Then came my wife, a girl. I saw them coming in with nothing, with *tzerisen* slacks.

Q: Torn slacks.

A: Torn slacks and not [unintelligible]. And they had escaped Communism from Budapest through water and their feet got swollen. I asked the man in charge in Vienna, Richel, where this girl was, what hospital she was in. I went and saw the girls and I brought them bananas and oranges. She couldn't speak Yiddish at all. A lot of people from Hungary didn't speak Yiddish. And then I took them to Linz, to a better Jewish camp.

Q: The Joint Distribution camps?

A: Yes, a Joint camp. Mr. Friendland in Linz was in charge of the Joint Distribution camp, and I told him they were from Hungary and I wanted him to give them good clothes. I wanted him to look after them because I liked this girl, and he laughed at me and he said he would look after them. Then a year passed. I tried my best, but she said I wasn't serious, and all the Hungarian people said, "Oh, Polish-Russian." I had already tried [unintelligible] and I had made some money.

Q: You were about how old at that time?

A: I was already 25 or 26 years old, and I looked good. I looked established a little bit. And I fell in love and I married her.

Q: In Linz?

A: My daughter was born in Linz. And while we were in Linz, my wife got letters from Hungarian immigrants in Australia who had gone there a year before. They wrote good letters that Australia was very good. She said she wanted to go to Australia. I said it didn't matter to me. I had lost everybody. What's the difference to me? So we went to Australia. It was very tough the first three

years. There was a depression and no work, and as I said to you before, I didn't learn anything, any profession, because I was very young, and I didn't have the time to...I am not saying I am the smartest man in the world. I am the same Jew, the same like everybody, but I came to Australia and I went to work, but it wasn't enough to keep my wife and child. I went and found a little shop. I had a dry cleaning shop in combination with a laundry. It didn't work out. It was too hard for my wife. So I noticed there was a very big demand for coffee lounges, and I opened a store with coffee and lunch, and we were very successful. It was a beautiful place.

Q: It was a restaurant?

A: It was like a restaurant. You didn't have to eat. You could just go in and have a cappuccino, a nice continental cake. My coffee lounge had tables with umbrellas. You didn't need to sit in the restaurant. A girl would come out and take your order. And it was in a very good location, near big offices and big companies, and they always came to us. 22 years I have been in the business.

Q: That was an established business. So you really moved yourself along.

A: And I've traveled for the last ten years to see my daughter. And when I traveled to see her in the United States, I always took a ticket to Israel. I could not miss Israel. And Europe. Hong Kong is my love. First is Israel, but Hong Kong...why? Because I like to buy things. I like to make my ticket. And if you want to make your ticket, you must stay over in Hong Kong. That you can do to...minimum to make your ticket, what you spend on your ticket. Because in Hong Kong there are a lot of things you can do. Everything is free duty. You can bring out half of Hong Kong and nobody will arrest you.

Q: Nobody will ask questions, so that becomes an area that you really enjoyed being in.

- A: I like Israel very much. If my daughter had married in Israel, I would be very successful in Israel.
- Q: I was going to ask you, you sound like the type of person that would really love....
- A: I love it. I've sent her to Israel three times. My wife's had a sister in Israel for 32 years. They built a kibbutz there in Israel. I went in 1962 for the first time for myself. The second time I took my wife, but she didn't like it very much. Then I took her a third time and she started to fall in love with Israel. Then my daughter finished college. I don't know how it is in America, but in Australia when the kids are finished in school or their education is finished, they go to Israel. They don't want a car. They want their parents to send them to Israel if they can afford it. So I sent my daughter to Israel. When she went the last time, she first went to see my mother-in-law in Budapest, and my sister and my wife's sister in Sofia, Bulgaria, and then she went to Israel, to Haifa. A lot of American kids came, and she meet this boy, Jay Levine, from Long Island. They fell in love. I will make this very short. I went to New York with my wife. I gave over the business to my friends, and made the wedding in Long Island, and *kinaynhorra*¹⁴ I got a wonderful son-in-law. He's a very gorgeous boy and a very knowledgeable boy, and that's what keeps him...he likes everything that he is doing.
- Q: A learning type of boy. That's quite a life cycle. Now you are in Atlanta and it's going to take a while for you to adjust. I am sure.
- A: That's some big difference. If you went to Sydney today...I'm not saying it's a big city but it's a good community, and when you are in Sydney and you belong to a community, you don't need to be free. You can be free and go to a

¹⁴Knock on wood

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club and it's open, like in Las Vegas. You belong to our club like I belong to our club. My name is Zew Budansky. I gave you the right name and you go to the 15th floor. If you want to play ping pong, you play ping pong. You want to swim, you can swim, all on the 15th floor. If you want a sun bath....

Q: A Jewish club?

A: A Jewish club. You want to play the poker machine, you want to play blackjack, or you want to see a show in the restaurant, you sit in the restaurant. You can see Sammy Davis Jr. from America. All these big guys. Frank Sinatra. And if you want to go to a kosher restaurant, you go to the 16th floor, you got a kosher restaurant, something which is out of something special.

Q: How large a Jewish population is there in Sydney?

A: In Sydney, about 60,000. Melbourne is bigger. There is Polish/Jewish in Melbourne. In Sydney there are more Hungarians and Czechoslovakian/Germans. There are a lot of Polish people, but only because they are making a good living. And most of the Jewish population of Australia is very well off. I'll tell you why. You don't need to read well, you don't need to [unintelligible] well, you don't need to...when you came to Australia, anything you touched...if you don't even know how to sign your name and there are people today who can't even sign their names, they are millionaires. Anything they touched, they made a lot of money.

Q: At the time that they came?

A: Yes.

Q: But today, that's not true.

A: Yes, but today it's still easier than it is here because thousands of Americans are settling down there. All the Americans there are very, very happy. For instance, the medical care is free.

Q: Socialized medicine?

A: It's not socialized. If you are working, they take out about \$2 or \$3 per week from your wages. You go to the doctor and you pay \$20 or \$30 or \$50. You then go across the road to the government office. You give them the receipt, and they give you the money back. You go into the hospital to have a baby, and it costs \$2,000 or \$3,000. You pay and you go over and they pay the money back. And if anything happens, everything is paid.

Q: Less expensive to live there.

A: Less expensive. You pay a minimum of about \$60 or \$70 per month here for your utilities, for gas and electricity. In Sydney, I used to have a beautiful condominium with a balcony all around facing the beach, about 50-60 feet long. Everything there is paid quarterly, and \$44 is the most I have paid for electricity in any quarter, any three months.

Q: Your wages are according to that too.

A: Bigger, yes, much bigger. But even people from Greece, who can't speak English, come and they earn right away more than \$6 per hour.

Q: I didn't realize there was such a difference. I am going to get back into some of the questions that we have here. You belong to a synagogue?

A: My son-in-law and daughter told me to come to Atlanta, because it is warmer than the north, and in Australia there is no winter, no snow. They are now in Louisville, Kentucky and he wants to try to go to Emory University, and he wants to settle here. He said it would be better here because Louisville has no Jewish community. There is a Jewish community, but they haven't got a [unintelligible]. They don't have anything. He said I know you are not religious, but you know you like Jewish people. So I said yes and we came to Atlanta.

Q: But you don't belong to any....

A: I would like to belong, but I can't take my responsibility and not that I am against freedom, because in America there is some *mishagas*¹⁵ [unintelligible]. I would like to go to a conservative synagogue like I did in Sydney. That's what I like. Do you belong to a synagogue? Beth Jacob?

Q: No. I belong to the AA on the other side of town, the Ahavath Achim. That's conservative.

A: That's what I like. I think I saw it. It's a big one.

Q: Very big. It's on Peachtree Battle.

A: I think the agent who took me to look for some houses stopped and showed me that synagogue.

A: That may be. It's a very nice building too. It really is.

Q: I'd like to buy a house, but it's so much interest, it is impossible.

Q: Now it's almost impossible. I have covered so much more than I ever intended to, and I probably tired you out in the process.

A: I would remember. I remembered yesterday. My wife told me I had an appointment and believe me, I forget everything and I wanted to make myself a note yesterday. It was about 11:00 at night and I thought I don't need notes. I know.

Q: Once you get started....

A: If you asked me again, I will go with the same thing and tell you exactly the same thing.

Q: Once you get started, it is very easy to....

A: Once you get started...because believe me I can tell you stories. That's why I said our Jewish people have forgotten what has happened to our Jewish people.

¹⁵Craziness

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Q: It's not so much forgetting, but that the majority doesn't even know. They don't even know enough to forget. It is hard for young people to understand.

A: The young generation should know. The history of what our people went through in the ghettos and in the concentration camps should be taught in school a minimum of one hour a day.

Q: We are doing a good bit of that where we are teaching in the schools, through the Anti-Defamation League. Various members of the community are going out into the schools. We have programs in some of the high schools, and some of the members of the Jewish community volunteer to come and speak to some of the high school classes.

A: That's a very good thing. A school teacher has already asked me to go.

Q: Yes, you really should.

A: But I am going away to Louisville to see my daughter for a couple of weeks. I promised that I will come and talk to the kids when I come back. I love to and when I see kids, more and more will come to me to explain to them exactly....

Q: And you explain to them the way that children can understand.

A: Exactly.

Q: But you come from a very unusual point of view, from the Russian side, and we just don't have those stories.

A: Yes. Because the Russians that are coming here now are so [unintelligible]. Maybe 1/2 % of them was in the army, because all of them ran.

Q: That's why your experience....

A: I must ask you, what do you personally think of the Russians who are coming now?

Q: I think I'd like to put that question back to you. What do you think about the Russians that are coming now out of Russia?

A: I've been involved in Australia. We gave money to help them, because the community gave to the Joint [Distribution Committee]. We helped them a lot, and I went to a meeting and they asked a lot of people in the community of Sydney why they didn't go into the Jewish community and become more involved with them? Because the Jewish people that went down in Sydney, if they have kids, they want to give them help to go to school, not to be a rabbi, but to know about Jewishness. They go one week, two weeks, then they are taken out and sent to public school. Then comes Rosh Hashonah and Yom Kippur. You don't need to go every Shabbos, we told them, to be religious, but if you go once a month, you feel you have your seat. You don't need to pay money and you know if you came from Russia, the rabbi will give you always a seat. We sent letters to them and came Yom Kippur in Russia...maybe between 600 and 700 people...and I am very disappointed in them. In a way, they are getting too much. First of all, I am against the whole Joint [unintelligible] Australia. All these people are sitting in Vienna and in Italy. They are kept there eight months in hotels, given this big money and it is spoiling them. And then they get a visa in Moscow, written very clearly, very plainly...it is a visa for Israel. In Israel, they were happy the first year when the Congress in America approved to take out Jewish people that they must go to Israel. Let Israel handle them if they want to leave Israel. Why [unintelligible] people get involved. It's a stopover in Italy. Fine. Keep them one week, then let them go to Israel. Then if they want to go somewhere else, fair enough. Let Israel handle that. Don't keep them eight months or one year in Italy on the shoulder of people. This money can go somewhere else. They are laughing at us. I went to Italy 2 1/2 years ago. I went to Milan with another man to buy some gold. And he knows I understand. He took me and bought me the ticket. And we went to Italy, and we went in where

they are living. They are living in beautiful hotels, paid for by the HIAS.¹⁶

Q: The HIAS organization is paying...

A: Yes. It still gives them money, pocket money, and then they change their minds [about going to Israel]. They find out, directly or not directly, that they have some brothers and sisters in America or Australia and they want to go there. Maybe some are lying -- I don't want to say. Not just me, but 90% of the Jewish community in Australia became very annoyed with that.

Q: You think they shouldn't have a choice to come to the U.S. The choice should be Israel, and then if they want to migrate from Israel, they can do that.

A: Fair enough. Israel shouldn't keep them. If they want to leave Israel and go to the U.S. or Australia to Canada or to New Zealand, I would say, Israel's a free country. But Israel should handle this. Israel should direct all this business.

Q: And there is a good possibility that many of them would remain in Israel, too, and Israel really needs them.

A: Exactly. Israel needs them, and why should they come in here, begging and crying? Madam, I saw a Russian immigrant in Sydney who had more diamonds in his pocket than I have ever seen in my life. And he went to the Jewish Welfare to ask for money to buy a condominium. And you know what? He got it. I asked myself a question. Why don't they check? Why can't they see they are making a mistake? It's not the right thing. Some of them come poor. I agree with them, but you can't...like here, you have Social Security. Some of them are entitled to it and some of them are not entitled. They should do the same thing. Some of them come in with a lot of money.¹⁷

Q: Out of Russia?

¹⁶Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society

¹⁷Mr. Budansky is saying some of the Russian immigrants are indeed poor and deserving of welfare. Others are wealthy but receive the same welfare monies because the welfare agency doesn't check up on them. He draws a parallel with the Social Security program in the U.S.

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A: Out of Russia. I know one who lives in Chicago. He has got a [unintelligible] factory. He's a millionaire. He took out a fortune. But he bribed the secret police to do it. Again, I am coming to the same point. It is not right to keep them in Italy or Vienna and spoil them. If they want a visa to Israel, they should go to Israel. Fair enough. The American Jewish community would like to know more Jewish people, immigrants. We are very happy they are arriving. We will welcome them.

Q: They come from a form of government where they are taken care of there. The government does everything for them. Now to come to the U.S. -- we are talking about the Russian Jews -- and they have to start to do things for themselves.

A: They didn't have anything there, the government didn't care for them. They are used to stealing. Nobody can survive in Russia on the wages they get.

Q: They do a lot of stealing?

A: A lot of stealing where they used to work. Some of them can tell their *meisele*¹⁸ to an American Jew, but they can't tell me. They can't tell me stories. I remember and today is much worse than...they must stay in the morning until 10 o'clock to get a kilo of meat and when the door is closed, they can't even get the the kilo of meat or a good loaf of bread. They can't tell me stories. They made money. They lived in beautiful apartments in Odessa. They lived in a condominium, somewhere on the Black Sea, nicer than maybe where you live in Atlanta. Maybe smaller, but they lived very good. They went out, they enjoyed themselves.

Q: You don't mix with many of the Russians here?

A: Yes, I mix with a couple of families. Yes. Very honest one from Moscow. The

¹⁸Stories

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Melitzair family. He came poor. He is a poor man. The American Jewish Committee helped him a lot and they got jobs. He is on a pension, but his wife still works, his son-in-law works, and they are very happy. They have free dental care, free medical care. They [unintelligible], but the point is his son would love to go to Israel. He said that if his mother and father won't come here, he would love to be there. What I am trying to tell you....

Q: Yes, I know. It's a very difficult situation.

A: A lot of children are going to school.

Q: The only solution is that...

A: I'm not saying people must. I am against that. But again, we need, we want to save the Jewish people in Russia, and that was a good idea. But the Russians were very clever to give them a visa to Israel, not a visa to America.

Q: There was a reason for that.

A: Yes. That's why they should go to Israel. And they were very happy when they got a visa to Israel. Now they want to go America. Here they can pick up money on the street, but every immigrant has it very good in Australia. The plane arrives from Italy on Wednesday. Their Russian friends come to pick them up. By Thursday night, I assure you Madam, they have already bought a car. Where did the money come from? I don't know. But if you ask my wife, she will say good luck to them, I am very happy. The thing is that we are bringing people in here, but maybe the Jewish state needs some of them. They could stay there. I am talking about young people. I am not talking about the middle aged or the elderly or those who want to help themselves to a better life in the U.S. and Australia. They went through maybe a hard time in Russia. [Unintelligible] to die because of Israel. Why start the trouble in the Jewish community because they want to go to Israel. They took away the jobs, they

don't let them go to synagogue, they don't let them go to meetings and people together, but that was before. But it was all the people -- doctors, architects, managers, directors. The Russian people didn't differentiate between being Jewish or not. It didn't say on your passport that you were Jewish. But the situation today has come within the last ten years, because of Israel, because of the Arab conflict. But again, I am looking from my Jewish point of view. If my daughter hadn't married an American, I would be there tomorrow. I don't care how hot it is. I would be there tomorrow.

Q: In Israel?

A: I would be in Israel. I have nothing to do in Atlanta. Beth Jacob is a very nice community. I've been invited to maybe 20 different homes....

Q: Sure.

A: We not talking about the Israelis at all.

Q: That's where your heart is.

A: My heart. I don't ask questions. Sometime they talk about how tomorrow we must do that in *shul*, we're going to Miami, we're going to a convention. But I've never heard them say we're going next year together to Israel and what are we doing about Israel, what is the situation in Israel. They never bring up the subject. You know what I mean?

Q: There's an awful lot being done here, certainly for Israel.

A: Oh yes, I know that.

Q: But in terms of the Russian family and their discussion about going to Israel, is there a fear because of the persecution?

A: No. Because of the Army. They don't like that. I'll tell you the reason. I've talked to a lot of them, and they say they have children and they don't want the Jewish Army to take their kids away to the front line. I said if the Russians took

you, you would be a Russian and you couldn't say to the Russians my child can't go to the Army. They would be sent to Siberia for 20 years. But because you are Jewish and you know that we are in a bad situation in Israel, and if your son goes to the Army, your son goes to a Jewish Army. Now, I understand the mother. She doesn't want her son to go in the Army, but again I am trying to make a point with her. If she were still in Russia and they were attacking Afghanistan, and her son became a Russian soldier, could you tell the Russians your son doesn't want to go to the Army? She said no. I said why can't you look at the situation in Israel the same way?

Q: It's hard for them to look at it that way, I am sure. That's a very good point. Is there anything else that you have that we haven't covered? I have just about covered everything here.

A: There is one thing. When you are giving lectures to kids it's not nice to say this, but, unfortunately, after the war, you found a lot of Jewish couples who used to work with the Germans to save their own lives. I wouldn't like to suggest that you tell that to children of the new generation. But a friend of mine and I caught a couple in Austria and we looked after them for three years in [unintelligible] but it was a real...he gave up Jewish people to the concentration camps in order to save himself. And that's not a nice thing to...

Q: In a way it's important. I think that it's always important that the truth be told.

A: I know, yes.

Q: And that's part of the truth.

A: Yes, it is.

Q: And children are entitled to hear the truth, no matter how bad it sounds, to learn what not to do from the truth.

A: Yes, I agree, but what kind of children. What age children.

Q: I am talking about teenagers that are old enough to develop some thought. And with young children, you are very limited in what you can share. In my own teachings of young children about the Holocaust, I talk about hope. The existence of hope in some of the art work that came out of there and some of the poems, and some of the experiences between the young and old there, and to give them a feeling that under the worst of conditions, the greatest amount of despair, for some there is still a feeling of hope.

A: There is a feeling of I hope but I hope the situation will change. What I am saying here to you has nothing to do with my going to the concentration camps and my suffering with what I saw myself, but unfortunately what I see in the future, the United States is going on the the wrong side.

Q: We are in the middle of a very critical time. Very critical time.

A: I would say you don't have a man who can lead this country in the right direction, economically and politically, and he has done so bad, in my opinion. He has done the worst thing for Israel than any other president of the U.S. The best to me was Nixon. I've been in Israel seven times now. My wife's sister's son is a pilot, a captain in the Army. I asked him what do you think the Israeli Army would do if they were attacked. He said thank God for 1973. If no Nixon, no Israel. He said to die we can't afford to lying and to listen to what they are saying to us. We must do ourselves. What he's [President Nixon] done for the political life of the United States is a different business. I'm not accusing him of anything because I'm not an American citizen. I am only a permanent resident. I don't think he's done more wrong than any other president. If he had not [unintelligible] he would be today the hero of the United States. He did with the Russians what nobody could do. He did with China what nobody could do. He was looking like a president. Maybe he was tough, maybe he was arrogant.

You need sometimes to be arrogant in a job like that. I wouldn't have survived if I hadn't been arrogant in the Army. I say this way to compare. He's done the best for Israel.

Q: The idea of leadership is to be able to act without having to react to somebody all the time, to take the initiative to do something that we are going to have to move towards.

A: I would prefer myself to see the Jews of the community take a risk and vote for Reagan because they have no other choice. I can tell you what's going to happen. If [Jimmy] Carter stays in office, and I predict [unintelligible] was talking to a very normal man who went through a lot. He promised a lot to the American people, but he didn't keep his promises. He promised he would do his best for Israel, he didn't keep it. He gave up more than we needed to. And [unintelligible] wants to give more. He will succeed in some way. But with Reagan I would hope that he wouldn't let it go. He would be tough on this point.

Q: I wonder. I don't think we have any answers at this point, and that's the whole problem. I myself don't have an answer. I wish I did. It's a tough election. I am very frustrated. Before I forget, because I think we can go on here all day, I have to get you to sign this release form, which you can certainly read it. It says that all the information that we have shared can be made available for use for any particular studies. And I want to thank you very very much for all the information you shared with us, in a very unique area.

[Interruption in tape. Conversation resumes as follows]

Q: Let's put this on again for a minute, because you mentioned the effect the

experience had on you, and you mentioned the nightmares we just talked about. When they started, was this during the process, when you were having the experiences, or more recently?

A: The experiences to me - more recently.

Q: The nightmares or the experiences?

A: The nightmares more recently after the last 16 years. The first ten years I got nightmares, but not as often as now. They come all the time.

Q: You say now, you mean the past five years?

A: Past five years, because I am involved with the Jewish community in Sydney. Every night it comes to me. I can see my family. I can see the people dying, the people on the street dying, and when I go into fight, I see them run away and it is only a second before the Germans catch me.

Q: You ran away from Germans?

A: My tank was burning and all the three others were alive. They all ran away. I was the last one, and the German who was shooting at me was maybe about 200 yards away, and I was running zigzag. I went into where wheat was growing. I zigzagged in the wheat and I ran into a barbed wire....

[End of tape. Conversation resumes on new tape as follows.]

Q:and he was asked his feeling about God, and he was going to be talking to a group of people, and someone said to him, "what would you say if somebody asked you about God, do you believe in God?" And he replied with another question and the question was "which God?" "The one that brought me into the camps or the one that took me out of the camps?"

A: Out of the camp... exactly.

Q: And I think that was a very unusual response.

A: That's what I think. I mean the Jews have gone through a lot in history with the Spanish thing, the Germans, the Russian Czar, and all the Ukrainian pogroms. We went through a lot, but like you say, the same thing -- where was He when we went in and where was He maybe when He took us out? I mean it's a question which nobody can answer.

Q: Absolutely with no answer.

A: But again we must keep our Jewishness. We must keep our faith, because the only thing we can hold on to...believe me, if it weren't for Israel, all of us would suffer. It doesn't matter where we are. Not like Hitler made us suffer but we would suffer a lot of things that we didn't [unintelligible], doing what we want. We have our communities, we have our shuls, we have our schools, we got everything that we can do in our life. [Unintelligible] freedom in the U.S. and Australia and in Canada and in England, and I think we couldn't have this whole thing as easy if it weren't for Israel.

Q- Israel has become the symbol for the refuge.

A: Yes...

Q: Again, thank you very very much.